



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Cooperative Program ends  
1990-91 behind last year

NASHVILLE (BP)--Cooperative Program gifts received by the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee during the 1990-91 fiscal year surpassed the basic operating budget for the year but fell slightly below a year ago.

"The September Cooperative Program provides for a comparison between the fiscal years 1989-90 and 1990-91," said Harold C. Bennett, president/treasurer of the Executive Committee.

"The good news is that the SBC basic Cooperative Program budget was met on Sept. 25," said Bennett. "The SBC Cooperative Program receipts, year-to-date, were almost \$2.9 million over the basic operating budget. Then, by convention action, the overage was divided on a 50-50 basis to capital needs budget and program advance."

The SBC action provides for any year the basic budget is met, 50 percent of the overage goes to a 1985-90 SBC capital needs budget which was rescheduled over a ten year period from 1990-91 through 1999-2000. Agencies included in that capital needs budget would get a prorata percentage of that overage. The remaining 50 percent of the overage would be program advance funds distributed according to the same percentages as the CP basic allocation budget.

"The distribution was made to capital needs in the amount of \$1,433,936 and the same amount was distributed to program advance," said Bennett.

"The bad news is that the SBC Cooperative Program receipts fell short of last year by \$509,887.61 or .036 percent," said Bennett. "For the first time in a quarter of a century, maybe back to the 1925 beginning of the CP, the receipts were less than the previous year.

"On a constant dollar basis the SBC CP receipts for the past four years have been less than the previous year. I deeply regret these statistics and feel that Southern Baptists will rally to meet the world mission needs during this 1991-92 fiscal year," said Bennett.

The SBC Cooperative Program receipts for 1990-91 totaled \$140,200,394 compared to 1989-90 of \$140,710,282 or \$509,887 less than a year ago. The September gifts received by the Executive Committee were \$10,800,923 compared to September 1990 of \$11,863,345 or more than \$1 million less than a year ago. The 1990-91 monthly basic budget requirement was \$11,444,377.

However, designated gifts sent to the SBC were up in September compared to a year ago: \$1,771,015 compared to \$1,725,510. For the year, designated gifts reached \$124,181,625 compared to the previous year of \$124,879,324 or a .56 percent decrease.

Designated contributions include Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Home Mission Board's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, world hunger and other special gifts.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting ministry and missions through state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries.

Pastor's criticism draws  
ire of Baylor president

By Orville Scott

WACO, Texas (BP)--Baylor University President Herbert Reynolds charged Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, with exploiting his alma mater "to establish his credentials as a bona fide fundamentalist" after Gregory criticized Reynolds and Baylor's plan to elect most of its regents.

Trustees of the 12,000-student university revised the school's charter last fall to establish a semiautonomous governing board of regents, citing fears fundamentalist Baptists might take over the state convention as they have institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Gregory, in a Sunday morning sermon, Sept. 29, disputed the contention of a "fundamentalist takeover" and said a proposal adopted by the 193-member Texas Baptist executive board Sept. 10 betrays the trust of Baylor's Baptist benefactors.

Assailing Baylor's action, he said, "In one brief session with suspended rules and unsuspecting trustees, 145 years of Texas Baptist -- world Baptist -- history was suddenly ended by a self-appointed college of cardinals."

"From its beginning, Baylor University was the crown jewel of Texas Baptists," said Gregory. "The life of Baylor University and the First Baptist Church of Dallas can't be severed."

He charged Baylor's action has brought the Baptist General Convention of Texas to "the greatest crisis in its history. He also said, "President Reynolds doesn't have the right to play with 145 years of history."

Two weeks before Gregory's sermon, the 193-member BGCT executive board approved a compromise proposal worked out by Baylor and convention officers. The proposal to be presented to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Waco, Nov. 11-12, provides for direct election of 25 percent of Baylor regents by the convention and assurance that Baylor will consider convention suggestions for the other 75 percent.

Approved by a vote of 110-36 in the executive board, the proposal also assures the university will remain Baptist and Christian in its aims and ideals, all Baylor board members will be Baptists and university assets would be transferred to the convention should the university be discontinued.

In his sermon, Gregory berated state convention officers for drafting a compromise affiliation agreement with Baylor, calling their actions "inexcusable and unprecedented." He said he is mailing copies of his sermon to 5,000 pastors in Texas to gain support for his cause.

Gregory called the threat of fundamentalist takeover "a red herring" and said the trustee action was made without BGCT notification and in violation of the convention's constitution.

He said Reynolds "will not speak to the issue," which he said is to "stop name-calling" and to return Baylor to its historic relationship with the BGCT.

Reynolds said that while Gregory was a student at Baylor, "he never expressed a criticism about the university and its faculty. However, since 1988 when he apparently began to covet the First Baptist Church of Dallas position, Joel has been willing to hammer his alma mater, his former professors and me, and now his fellow pastors, to establish his credentials as a bona fide fundamentalist."

Reynolds said Gregory had wanted to be a Baylor trustee and "cannot tolerate the accord that has developed between Texas Baptists and Baylor because of his uninvolvedness, and he apparently will stoop to any level to try to be destructive" of the agreement.

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"He slandered the reputations of the elected leadership of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; the Baylor regents, all of whom are faithful Texas Baptists; as well as myself," said Reynolds.

Gregory said Reynolds "doesn't know my motives. Herb's answer to everything is a personal attack."

Gregory, a former BGCT president, said in his Sunday sermon Reynolds wrote in a 1984 letter in the school newspaper the Baptist General Convention of Texas owned Baylor.

He quoted Reynolds as saying, "While we have long received support from the BGCT, which owns the university, we have benefited greatly from diversity on our campus."

Gregory said, "Let it be said, if the BGCT owns Baylor University in 1984, it owns it in 1991."

Reynolds responded in a news conference the next day that in the 146-year history of Baylor, there has never been a reference to convention ownership in the Baylor charter.

He said while the SBC struggle was launched by a group he called "Presslerites" in reference to Judge Paul Pressler of Houston, the BGCT/Baylor issue was launched by Gregory's criticism of Baylor in his president's message at the state convention in Austin in 1988.

"Since that time," said Reynolds, "he (Gregory) has done everything he possibly could to align himself with the Presslerites to make sure he stayed in tune with those folks so he could fulfill his personal ambitions which I think he has done in assuming the pulpit of First Baptist Church, Dallas."

Reynolds said he became concerned after Gregory singled out Baylor in his convention address. He talked with the university's general counsel whom he said determined "that the convention had never owned Baylor or any of the other institutions.

"If they didn't own us before, they don't own us now," he said.

"We want to cooperate with Texas Baptists and carry out the ministries of Texas Baptists because we believe in them, not because of what we are in terms of our legal relationship according to the constitution of the convention."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Many moving stories are emerging from the attempted coup in Moscow in August. Among them are the experiences of Soviet Christians who braved danger as they tried to prevent bloodshed and turn back tanks with Bibles and words of peace from the gospel. This first-person account, translated from the Russian by Lisa Taylor of Fort Worth, Texas, was written by Vera Kadaeva. Kadaeva, a Ukrainian, has worked in Moscow for years as an employee in the editorial department of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. She is an active Baptist church member and volunteer in Christian charitable ministries, regularly writing letters of encouragement to prisoners and teaching Bible to children in an orphanage in Moscow.

At the barricades  
with the gospel

By Vera Kadaeva

Baptist Press  
10/1/91

MOSCOW (BP)--The fact that those people (the coup leaders) chose the Day of Transfiguration for the coup was an omen of their defeat.

When at 8 a.m. (Aug. 19) we learned what had happened during the night, my first thought was, "Lord! How little we managed to do for you." I wanted to tell people about Christ. My heart broke out in prayer: "Lord! Teach me to do your will."

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In the afternoon on the streets of Moscow, I saw tanks and armored personnel carriers. The city was seething and nervous. Crowds of people were walking towards the Russian Parliament building. At the evening worship service, the church was celebrating the cheery holiday of the Lord's Transfiguration.

I sat in the sanctuary, and somehow my soul was restless. I decided to take some New Testaments, magazines and brochures and go to Red Square to speak to people about Christ, taking advantage of this -- perhaps final -- opportunity.

The streets were deserted. A curfew had been announced beginning at 4 p.m. I wished a happy holiday to the rare passers-by who were on their way to Red Square and gave them a New Testament. People smiled nice smiles, thanking me. I felt relieved. The hope appeared that nothing terrible would happen.

The square was surrounded. Tanks and armored personnel carriers were situated at Saint Basil's cathedral and Kamennyi Bridge. Two soldiers came towards me. I turned directly to them, saying, "I have come to you with a word from God: 'Thou shalt not kill.' That is God's commandment. Life is a gift from God, and no one has a right to lift a hand against his neighbor."

One of them, a tall fellow with brown eyes, said to me, "But God forgives even worse crimes than that."

"No, you can't outwit God," I answered him. "After all, you know that that is a sin. You can't kill defenseless people, counting on his forgiveness. Understand that, friend!" He could not counter that with anything. Now I knew what I needed to do: speak the word of God to people, his commandment.

On Tuesday (Aug. 20) I went to the same place with my friend Kostya. He carried a bag with New Testaments and Christian newspapers. Rows of tanks were lined up on Kamennyi Bridge. Civilians, mainly young people, surrounded them. They engaged in a lively political discussion with the commander of a small unit. Sharp words were being thrown in the direction of the soldiers.

We began to distribute the New Testaments to the tank crews. The first boy, standing by his tank holding a submachine gun, was named Seryozha. I asked where he was from. Outside of Minsk, he replied. "You know, I too learned how to load a machine gun, but I never have used one," I told him.

There were other young soldiers -- Yuris, Sashas and Petyas from Ivanov, Nizhnyi Novgorod and the far east. I held out Testaments to them, and they stretched out their hands towards me.

I spoke to them with tears, "We are praying for you! May the Lord help you not to violate his commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.'" Immediately the boys, sitting on their tanks, opened the gospel and began to read. My heart rejoiced looking at them.

Then the discussion around the commander became very heated. One elderly man stepped forward and, looking him in the eye, shouted, "I'm your father. Are you really going to crush me with your tanks?" The officer became nervous. Everyone was waiting for his answer.

"I won't shoot you, father," the commander finally said. "I won't shoot anybody."

At that moment I suddenly exclaimed, "May I tell about God?" I did not know if the people wanted to listen to me. Someone in the crowd shouted, "Let her go to the front and stand there and tell us what God says!"

I ended up in front of the officer with a New Testament in my hands. "Brother," I said to him, "this is the word of God. He says to you, 'Thou shalt not kill.' This commandment is above all your orders. Take this Testament and may God help you!" He looked at the gospel, trying to decide whether or not to stretch out his hand to take it. Someone from the crowd shouted, "Take the gospel, Captain!" Everyone joined in: "Take the gospel!"

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The officer slowly reached out and took the New Testament from me. That was a sign for the people that he would not turn his tanks on them.

We went around to all the tanks. I looked at those tired, dirty, confused boys, and in each of them I saw my 19-year-old nephew Seryozha, who just this summer had been called into the army. "Lord! Save these children! Save Russia!" I prayed.

Policemen and army officers stood at the barricades on the square. One officer from Khabarovsk had such clear, blue, childlike eyes I could not refrain from saying to him, "What pretty eyes! You could never kill anyone. To kill is weakness. To die for another is strength, the strength of love. Our Savior, Christ, died for all of us on the cross. Think about that."

(Let me add that during the past spring New Testaments were distributed and several evangelistic services were held among the Tamanskii and Kantemirovskii tank divisions, which were now on the streets of Moscow. "The Word of God will not return void.")

On Manege Square a large crowd was gathering: passers-by, foreigners, children. Tanks, armored personnel carriers and a barrier of submachine gunners sat on the square. The thought came to me to take some gospels in my hands and go to the tanks, through the barrier. No one even called out to me. I handed Testaments to the tank crewmen.

Several began jumping off the tanks, approaching me and asking for a gospel. I saw only faces and hands. Even now they appear before my eyes. "Give me the book about God," said one soldier, either an Uzbek or a Tadzhik. People in the crowd were shouting, "Give the soldiers one!" Such was the hunger for God's word. People wanted to hear it and accept it.

When we ran out of gospels, I said to Kostya, "We need to come here again." That evening Kostya decided to be baptized.

On Wednesday (Aug. 21) at the morning prayer meeting, I had the strong impression to tell my co-workers what we had experienced. "We must pray for these soldiers," I said. "They are our children who are being driven to commit a crime. I said in your name, 'We are praying for you!' Blood has already been shed." We all prayed for the salvation of our country that has suffered so much. All the churches were praying during these three long days.

After the prayer, (Baptist leaders) Mikhail Zhidkov, Aleksandr Batylin and the driver of Mission of Mercy's car loaded New Testaments into the trunk and drove around the city. At Novosti press agency we gave gospels to the crews of several armored personnel carriers.

The commander willingly gave us permission and immediately became interested. "Don't I get one?" he asked.

A column of armored carriers had stopped on Tverskii Boulevard. We jumped out of the car in the middle of the street and gave Testaments to the crews, repeating the words, "Thou shalt not kill." The effect of those words was like a thrust of electrical current. One young soldier got tears in his eyes when I turned to him with the words, "My dear son, don't kill." An elderly man stood in the middle of the street cursing the soldiers. I urged him with the words of the gospel, "Bless and curse not."

Towards noon, having struggled through traffic jams, breaking traffic laws on several occasions, we got to the Russian Parliament building. Here we found people who had guarded the Parliament building (with Russian President Boris Yeltsin inside) for three days. It was pouring down rain. We trudged through puddles and mud with the gospels in our hands. We gave Testaments to the tank crews that had come over to President Yeltsin's side.

"We repented and received communion," said one soldier to whom I had given a Testament.

"Well, wonderful!" I answered. "Now take the word of God, the good news, so that you may know God's will." Tears were running down my cheeks, and the rain washed them away...

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I made my way across the square, now called the Square of Free Russia, to the barricades on Kalinin Avenue. Bulldozers had dug up the median. Reinforced concrete slabs and steel frameworks were piled there. Barricades made from overturned trolley buses and dump trucks were on the streets.

On one of the trolley buses hung a banner reading "Thou shalt not kill" in huge red letters -- words we had often repeated during these past few days, words whose effect on people in uniform we had seen with our own eyes.

People took shelter from the rain in the trolley busses. Behind the buses stood a human barrier -- people standing arm in arm, elbows locked. Behind them tanks and armored personnel carriers partitioned off the street.

Those in the human chain would not let anyone through. I asked them to let me give New Testaments to the tank crews. I held a Testament with a cross. They released their arms, and I squeezed between the tanks. A soldier hurried towards me. "Brother, take a gospel!" I said. He looked at me with eyes wide: "Really?!" With dirty hands he clasped it to his bosom. Then, remembering his mates: "Give me three more, for the guys."

So I was able to cross to the other side of the barricades with the gospel. I had no fear. It seemed as though my feet were not even touching the ground. I had such joy because I was carrying God's word, the power of God for salvation to all who believe. And great was the power and faith and love I had towards those people. That was one of the most powerful experiences of my life.

I returned the same way I went through. A miracle! The word of God knows no boundaries. People need it on both sides of the barricade.

It was noon on Aug. 21. No one yet knew how it would all end. No one knew Ivan Silayev would return safely from the Crimea with President Gorbachev and the coup perpetrators would be arrested.

But the people, with tense expectation, believed. We believed the Lord would save Russia. And for that reason we went to the barricades ... with the gospel.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Yugoslavian violence  
takes toll on churches

By Art Toalston & Stanley Crabb

Baptist Press  
10/1/91

ZAGREB, Yugoslavia (BP)--At least nine Baptist congregations have become victims of civil war in Yugoslavia.

"We have a real war here," said Nela Williams, one of three Southern Baptist representatives in the splintering nation of six republics and 24 million people.

"This past week it's been quiet, at least in Zagreb," Williams reported Sept. 30 in a telephone interview from her home in the capital of the republic of Croatia. "But in many other places in Croatia, it's just war all the time. Every day another city is attacked."

Yugoslavia's national government, based in the republic of Serbia and dominated by Serbs, has squared off against Croatia's militia in a test of wills over declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia in June. Violent clashes have claimed more than 500 lives and forced an estimated 250,000 people, mostly Croats, to flee their homes.

Williams is a native of Yugoslavia. Her husband, James, also was a Southern Baptist representative there until his death in a 1980 auto accident. The other Southern Baptist workers there, Bill and Debbie Steele of Columbus, Ga., are involved in starting churches in the Yugoslav capital of Belgrade.

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Escalating strife has forced Baptist congregations in at least six towns and villages to disband, by Williams' count. European Baptist Press Service has received reports of three other congregations disbanding.

Church buildings may have been destroyed in bombing raids by the Serb-dominated military, Williams said. "You can't go into these places to see how much damage has been done," she noted. But she has heard reports of the destruction of hospitals, churches of various denominations, schools and homes for the elderly. In August, the two buildings at "God's Valley" Baptist campground were burned in a clash.

"Yesterday in church there were new faces because of all the refugees coming to Zagreb," Williams said. "I'll have some refugees in my home."

The Zagreb congregation, the lone Baptist church in the city, is collecting food, clothing, blankets, medicines and money to help refugee families through the coming winter.

Despite the dangers, "It's a crucial time for missionaries to be here," Williams said. When Zagreb came under artillery fire in mid-September, she joined many others in bomb shelters. She carried her Bible and shared some of the Psalms. "It's a great opportunity for contact (with people) now."

Prior to the civil war, Croats and Serbs worshiped together in a number of Yugoslavia's 120 Baptist churches and missions. They still do, according to two Baptist leaders.

"As far as we know, there's no division in any church with a mixed membership," said Branco Lovrec, president of the Croatian Baptist Union. Zellimir Srnec, home missions secretary for the Belgrade-based Yugoslavian Baptist Union, added: "Our believers are trying to be neutral, not involved in the nationalistic conflict."

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Summer conference attendance registers slight decrease

Baptist Press  
10/1/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Operation Desert Storm and the national economy may be the causes for summer attendance at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers to drop slightly from last year, an official said.

Combined summer conference center attendance at Southern Baptists' two national conference centers was down by about 2,200 in 1991 from last year, according to statistics compiled by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's conference center section.

Conference center totals at Ridgecrest (not including Centrifuge youth camp) were 21,940 in 1991 compared to 23,110 in 1990. At Glorieta, again without Centrifuge, registration totals in 1991 were 20,159, compared to the 1990 total of 21,185.

Centrifuge attendance added a total of 10,525 at both conference centers in 1991, 50 less than in 1990.

With Centrifuge, attendance at Glorieta and Ridgecrest totaled 52,624 in 1991. In 1990, those numbers were 54,870.

"The economy and Desert Storm could have had an impact (on attendance)," said Larry Haslam, manager of Glorieta and coordinator of the Sunday School Board's conference center marketing team. "There is no proof to that, but that's the only thing we could come up with."

Discipleship Training Leadership Week showed the only increase in total attendance figures for the summer, statistics revealed.

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In 1990, combined attendance was 2,347. In 1991, it was 3,886. Officials in the department speculated the improved attendance was due to a better time slot in the summer. In 1990, Discipleship Training Week at Ridgecrest was the last conference of the summer, creating scheduling conflicts among parents with school-aged children.

In 1990, the number of youth attending Summer Youth Celebration at Glorieta and Ridgecrest totaled 4,010. In 1991, that figure was 3,886.

Total Sunday school attendance was 14,762 in 1991. In 1990, that figure was 15,542. These figures do not reflect Centrifuge attendance.

Combined attendance at all other conferences decreased.

Glorieta and Ridgecrest conference centers are owned and operated by the Sunday School Board.

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Apathy paralyzing churches, Hemphill  
tells seminary students at revival By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press  
10/1/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The superficial confession of many Christians without commitment has paralyzed the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Southern Baptist pastor told students, faculty and staff during the annual revival at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Ken Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., preached six sermons in four days as he challenged students at Southwestern to a greater depth of commitment and a renewed sense of mission.

Hemphill's topics ranged from the nature of the church to the role and power of the church, as he emphasized the need for ministers and laypeople to stay busy sharing the "keys of the kingdom" -- the reconciliation with God made possible through Jesus.

Concerning the church, Hemphill said Ephesians 3 indicates the church is the creation of God designed to display his manifold wisdom.

"Are you willing to hold it (your church) up to the entire community and say, 'Here, see the wisdom of God. Here, see the glory of God,?' " he said. "That's what God intends for us."

But Hemphill said all too often churches play "the Lordship game," talking and singing about Lordship but "never expecting it to be embraced."

Using Matthew 16:13-19 as his text, Hemphill also examined the foundation of the church. He said Christians serve as "living stones" placed on the apostolic foundation and with Christ as the cornerstone. He said claiming a personal relationship with Christ demands a relationship with his bride, the church. Yet he said statistics indicate many Southern Baptists are treating the church with "apathy and disdain."

Hemphill said the average Southern Baptist church expects 50 percent of its membership to belong to Sunday school. He said 50 percent of those enrolled in Sunday school will attend on any given Sunday, and only 20 percent of that number will be involved in any way in the mission of the church.

Hemphill compared it to starting out in football practice with 80 people but at game time having only four players walk on the field.

"That is what is paralyzing the New Testament church," he said. "That is why the salt and light community is making such little impact on our neighborhoods."

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Hemphill said during the Persian Gulf crisis, many reservists were upset at the prospect of going to war. Having joined in a time of peace, they expected to enjoy the benefits of the reserves without being called to fight, he said.

"The fact is, the great majority of the members of our local churches joined for the benefits," he said. "They want the benefits of eternal life, they want the benefits of the fellowship and youth ministry, and they say, 'Hey, we didn't sign up to fight. Nobody told us there was any service involved,'" he said.

"This superficial confession without commitment has paralyzed the Lord Jesus Christ's church."

Hemphill also used the parable of the prodigal son to illustrate the role of the church in seeking the lost. Focusing on the older brother, Hemphill said this man had done everything necessary to keep his father's farm running, but had failed to find his brother.

"Can you imagine how much easier it would have been for the prodigal to come home if his brother had come to find him?" he said.

"One of the greatest tragedies of today is that so many times as pastors we can get into the running of the farm and forget the prodigals."

And just as the older brother refused to take part in the celebration of his brother's return, Christians miss out on God's "party time" when they fail to find the prodigals, he said.

Mark Edwards, minister of music at First Baptist Church of Nashville, served as music director for the revival.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Church, community make  
Fort Worth pastor a role model

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press  
10/1/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--At 65 years of age, retirement is the last thing on Nehemiah Davis' mind.

Davis, pastor of Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, believes he'll preach as long as he has health and strength.

Since coming to the 650-member church in 1963, Davis has distinguished himself as both a religious and community leader -- a combination he feels is natural.

"Service is an outgrowth of Bible study, whether that (service) be in the community or in the church," he said.

For Davis, his service is often a combination of both. That is why he is well known in Fort Worth as a spokesman on such issues as civil rights, education and other problems facing minorities.

Davis's service has included work with the NAACP, where he has been a driving force, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and the Baptist Ministers Union and the highly-visible Allied Communities of Tarrant County.

Throughout his ministry in Fort Worth, Davis has been known as a peacemaker when it comes to issues that concern him.

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"When you think of Nehemiah you think of a peacemaker," said Tarrant County Commissioner Dionne Bagsby. "Some people view him as not provocative enough, not forceful enough. But I don't think his congregation and a lot of people would accept too much anger or stridency."

"It's my nature and personality, even during the days of the civil rights marches, to try to work things out," Davis said.

Born in Centerville, Texas, Davis moved to Dallas at the age of 10. At 23, he accepted God's call to preach. He attended Southwestern in 1956-58, but left to devote more time to his pastorate in south Texas. Upon returning to Fort Worth he resumed his seminary studies and graduated with a master of divinity degree in 1966 and a master of arts in religious education degree in 1968.

And while Davis has been known in Fort Worth for his active role in the community, he has not neglected his role as pastor of Mt. Pisgah. Through the years, Davis said he has learned ministry has ongoing rewards, both internally and externally.

"Somebody may be dropping out of church while somebody at the same time is rededicating themselves to Christ. Somebody's not believing, somebody's believing. Somebody's displeased, somebody's very pleased, all at the same time," he said.

"You go back to the Bible -- to Moses, Samuel, all of them -- they had valleys and peaks, ups and downs, successes and failures," he said. "But in the end, they were able to accomplish what God had intended for them to accomplish."

Davis said one challenge in his ministry has been dealing with people's gradual drift from the church. His members live farther away than they did 30 years ago and they spend more time on vacations and other leisure activities, he said.

"The idea of a day belonging to the Lord is losing preeminence," he said. "It's more like a morning of the week belongs to the Lord."

But Davis said he remains encouraged by the deep hunger for the Word of God he sees in people.

"God has seen to it that the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the gospel is not and will not become obsolete," he said.

Along with his work in the church and community, Davis also helps young ministers. To avoid many of the stresses of ministry, Davis advises them to focus on God's will, not on what the world is supposed to look like after they do his will.

"When Paul completed God's will for him, he was, perhaps, at a chopping block," he said. "To a lot of people that would look like a failure, but because the Apostle Paul knew what God's will was for him ... he was able to say, 'I finished my course. I kept the faith.'"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary